

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Entry of this amendment and reconsideration of the present application, as amended, are respectfully requested.

Claims 1-50 and new claims 51-54 are presently active in this application. Claims 1-19, 21-25, 28-43 and 45-50 are rejected. Claims 20, 26, 27 and 44 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Claims 1, 4-7, 9, 10, 13-16, 18-21, 23, 24, 26-29, 33-35, 38, 39 and 42-50 are amended herein. Unless an argument is made below in support of the patentability of each of these claims over a cited prior art reference in view of an amendment to the claim, the changes to the claims do not relate to patentability.

Claim Rejections-35 U.S.C. §102

Claims 1, 2, 4-8, 10, 11, 13 and 15 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Kasama et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 4,066,415). The Examiner states that Kasama et al. shows in Figs. 4 and 5 an inflator module for inflating an airbag (18d) including an elongate housing (1d), a uniformly shaped propellant extending longitudinally (4d) and an ignitable coextensive coating on the propellant (7d).

The Examiner's rejection is respectfully traversed in view of amendments to independent claims 1 and 15.

Claims 1 and 15 are amended to include the features of the housing having a bottom wall, a top wall defining an opening through which gas flows to inflate the airbag and side walls connected to the bottom and top walls to thereby define a reaction chamber between the bottom wall, the top wall and the side walls. Claim 1 is also amended to recite that the propellant is "spaced apart from said top wall to define an unoccupied subchamber between said top wall and said propellant" whereas claim 15 is amended to recite that the igniter material layer is "spaced apart from said top wall to define an unoccupied subchamber between said top wall and said igniter material layer". This subchamber is a portion of the reaction chamber.

As shown in Fig. 2I, a "subchamber" 125 is defined between the screen member 129 and the layer of igniter mix 128, i.e., the coating on the propellant 127. This subchamber 125 is "a portion of the entire reaction chamber defined by the walls of the tube 121" (see the specification at page 23, lines 26-28).

Kasama et al. does not disclose a subchamber which is a portion of a reaction chamber, defined by walls of an inflator housing, and is situated between propellant or an igniter material layer and a wall of the inflator housing.

In Figs. 4 and 5, Kasama et al. shows a housing 1d with a cylindrical outer wall and circular end walls. There is no portion of a reaction chamber defined between the coating (7d) and a top wall which includes an opening through which gas flows.

Since Kasama et al. does not disclose all of the features now set forth in claims 1 and 15, it cannot anticipate the embodiments of the invention set forth in these claims or in claims 2, 4-8, 10, 11 and 13 which depend from claim 1. As such, it is respectfully submitted that the Examiner's rejection of claims 1, 2, 4-8, 10, 11, 13 and 15 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Kasama et al. has been overcome and should be removed.

Claim Rejections-35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 7-11, 14, 15, 39, 40, 42, 43 and 45-50 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Martin (U.S. Pat. No. 3,606,377) in view of Schafer (DE 39 32 576 A1). Claims 3, 6, 12, 14, 16-19, 21-25, 28 and 41 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Martin in view of Schafer and further in view of Cuevas (U.S. Pat. No. 5,058,921). Claims 29-32 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Martin in view of Witte (U.S. Pat. No. 5,333,899). Claims 33-38 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Martin in view of Witte and Schafer.

The Examiner's rejections are respectfully traversed in view of amendments to independent claims 1, 15, 16, 28, 29, 35, 39 and 48-50. The changes to these claims are similar and are discussed above with reference to claims 1 and 15.

The cited prior art does not disclose a subchamber which is a portion of a reaction chamber, defined by walls of an inflator housing, between a propellant or a coating/igniter material layer on propellant and a (top) wall of the inflator housing.

Martin describes an inflator module including a pyrotechnic gas generating material 22 which is housed in a C-shaped support means 38, 42. The support means do not include a top wall having an opening through which gas flows to inflate the airbag and which is spaced apart from a propellant or a coating or igniter material layer on propellant to define a portion of a reaction chamber. Rather, as clearly shown in Fig. 10 of Martin, since the propellant 24 fills the entire space defined by the C-shaped support and covers the entire inner surface of the C-shaped support, there cannot be any "subchamber" or portion of a reaction chamber defined between the propellant and a wall of the C-shaped support.

Schafer, as best understood, also does not disclose any such subchamber.

Cuevas describes an inflator module 10 including a propellant block 40 which is surrounded by a wall 62. The inflator module 10 is installed within the dashboard of the vehicle (see Fig. 1). There is no space between the propellant 40 and the wall 62 in the inflator of Cuevas.

Witte does not provide details of the inflator.

Since Martin, Schafer, Cuevas and Witte do not disclose all of the features now set forth in independent claims 1, 15, 16, 28, 29, 35, 39 and 48-50, one skilled in the art could not combine them to render obvious the embodiments of the invention set forth in these claims or in claims dependent therefrom. As such, it is respectfully submitted that the Examiner's rejections of the claims under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) have been overcome and should be removed.

New Claims

Claims 51-54 are presented herein. Claim 51 includes subject matter previously set forth in claim 35. Claims 52-54 include subject matter from claims 20, 26 and 44, respectively, which the Examiner indicated would be allowable over the prior art of record.


The extra claims fee of \$36 for presenting four additional claims and \$129 for presenting three additional independent claims in excess of three should be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-0266.

Interview Request

The Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned to discuss this application in order to advance the prosecution of this application if in the Examiner's opinion, the application can be allowed in view of the arguments set forth.

An early and favorable action on the merits is earnestly solicited.

FOR THE APPLICANT
Respectfully submitted,


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